

## Mishlei 11-16

# Honor

### Key Concepts

Honor is a social quality which represents the high opinion and respect that people have of you. It is often associated with wealth which has the effect of drawing honor in its wake.

If you have wealth, people are inclined to please you so they can benefit from your largesse. If you have honor, people are inclined to emulate you so that they can be more like you.

Although both honor and wealth can be used in fulfilling the will of Hashem, honor is the more desirable quality, because it can only be acquired through admirable behavior. Thus, although a person might put effort into gaining and keeping both wealth and honor, if he finds it necessary to choose one or the other, it should be honor rather than wealth.

However, along with wealth, honor has a down side in that it promotes arrogance because the people who have both are tempted to believe they are better than other people.

### Exploring Mishlei

(טז) אִשֶּׁת חַן תִּתְמַדֵּךְ כְּבוֹד וְעֲרִיצִים יִתְמַכּוּ עֶשֶׂר :

***(16) The woman of grace upholds honor but autocrats value wealth.***

Mishlei associates honor with a woman of grace, whose pleasing and charming qualities draw the praise and admiration of her husband and everyone who knows her. In contrast to honor, wealth is associated with an autocrat, such as a domineering husband, who seeks to control others, especially his wife, and who focuses on acquiring and keeping wealth as the means to satisfy his own need for power.

### Learning Mishlei

(16) The woman of grace — אִשֶּׁת חַן —  
upholds honor. — תִּתְמַדֵּךְ כְּבוֹד —  
but autocrats — וְעֲרִיצִים —  
value wealth. — יִתְמַכּוּ עֶשֶׂר —

## Additional Insights

### HONOR

(1) A woman of grace may be admired for her physical beauty and charm, which are a gift from the Creator. However, she should seek to be admired for her accomplishments and for her noble character traits, such as humility and devotion, all of which require some degree of effort on her part. (אבן עזרא, מצודות, מלבי"ם)

(2) A woman of grace especially values her dignity, the consciousness of her own moral value, held up high and unimpaired. She never acts in a way that might even remotely prejudice her moral dignity. As a result, even the most shameless libertine would not dare permit himself an unseemly expression in her presence. (רשר"ה)

(3) Whereas men are admired for their nobility and generosity, women are admired for their frugality and order, as well the encouragement and support they give to their husbands. (המאירי)

(4) It is in the nature of a man to spare no expense in showing hospitality to his guests as he values their high opinion of him. A good wife will find ways to subtly moderate this tendency and provide for a balanced and dignified hospitality without going overboard. However, she puts a major emphasis on the cheerful welcome and consideration she shows to her husband and any visitors to her home. (המאירי)

(5) Among the other specific qualities that may cause a woman to be admired depending on the circumstances are the following: she maintains a cheerful attitude even when disappointed; she supports her husband as much when he suffers a loss as when he is successful; she supports him as much when he is old as when he is young; she feels fulfilled when she is busy with her household duties; she avoids the company of contentious women; when she is hungry she tells people that she is satisfied; she honors her husband and is eager to serve him. For a more elaborate discussion of the qualities that make a woman appreciated and treasured, see Segment 31-02 (A Woman of Character). (המאירי, חנוך לנער)

(6) Autocrats are under the illusion that they can gain honor and respect by acquiring wealth and making people fear them. They think that the bad qualities they love define the essence of honor. But they fail to recognize that honor must be earned through good deeds and a humble spirit. It is through such attributes that a person will be truly loved and respected. (רבינו יונה)

WEALTH

(7) Wealth and honor are both gifts of Hashem. If a person makes use of the gift of wealth to give charity and help others, they will also receive the gift of honor.

(מלבי"ם)

(8) Wealth can be gained without honor, but this is characteristic of an autocrat who puts all his energies into gaining wealth. For example, because an autocrat values wealth he grants undeserved favors to those who give him bribes. (אבן עזרא, )

(מלבי"ם)

(9) Honor can be acquired without wealth, but only through good deeds and good middos. (מלבי"ם)